

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4884

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

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SUBJ: KNESSET DEBATE ON RABIN'S HAARETZ INTERVIEW

REF: TEL AVIV 6982

1. SUMMARY: PRIMIN RABIN TOLD KNESSET DEC 11 THAT
MAIN PURPOSE OF CONTROVERSIAL DEC 3 HAARETZ INTERVIEW
WAS TO PREVENT ACCUSATION OF ISRAELI OBDURACY IN SEARCH FOR
NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT WITH EGYPT. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT GOI
POLICY IS CONTAINED IN OFFICIAL CABINET DECISIONS AND KNESSET
STATEMENT, AND NOT IN NEWSPAPER INTERVIEWS. END SUMMARY.

2. IN REPLY TO LIKUD MOTION RE DEC 3 HAARETZ INTERVIEW,
RABIN, SAPEAKING IN KNESSET DEC 11, REAFFIRMED GOI'S
COMMITMENT TO SEEKING NEGOTIATED POLITICAL SETTLEMENTS WITH
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ARAB STATES. MAIN POINTS OF PRIMIN'S STATEMENT ARE

SUMMARIZED BELOW (ON BASIS OF OFFICIAL GOI TEXT).

3. RABIN STATED THAT ISRAEL IS READY FOR PEACE IMMEDIATELY, BUT, IN ABSENCE OF SUCH POSSIBILITY, SEEKS PEACE IN STAGES BY INTERIM SETTLEMENTS. GOI WANTS TO IMPEDE "WAR-MONGERS IN THE ARAB WORLD" AND PREFERS PROGRESS IN STAGES TO DETERIORATION OF POLITICAL SITUATION LIKELY TO LEAD TO RESUMPTION OF HOSTILITIES.

4. FOLLOWING RENEWAL OF UNDOF MANDATE, GOI HOPES THAT, THROUGH GOOD OFFICES OF SECRETARY KISSINGER, CYCLE OF POLITICAL CONTACTS WILL BE RESUMED, FIRST OF ALL WITH GOVT OF EGYPT WITH AIM OF SECURING PROGRESS TOWARD PEACE. FONMIN ALLON'S DISCUSSIONS IN US ARE BASED ON GOI FOREIGN POLICY GUIDELINES, FUNDAMENTALS OF WHICH WERE PRESENTED IN RABIN'S POLITICAL STATEMENT TO KNESSET OF NOV 5, 1974 (TEL AVIV 6396). "THIS STATEMENT IS THE AUTHORITATIVE DEFINITION OF OUR POLICY AND FOR ALL THE INTEREST THERE MAY BE IN EXPRESSIONS IN OTHER PLACES, IN TALKS AND IN ARTICLES IN THE PRESS, I RECOMMEND TO THE MEMBERS OF THE KNESSET THAT THEY RELATE TO THE GOVT'S POLICY IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS AUTHORITATIVE STATEMENTS IN THE HOUSE."

5. RABIN SAID THAT AFTER RABAT THERE ARE STRONG ELEMENTS, NOT ONLY IN SYRIA, PRESSING FOR RESUMPTION OF FIGHTING. " I DO NOT HESITATE TO STATE THAT THE GOVT'S MOVES, INCLUDING MY INTENTIONS AND EXPRESSIONS, ARE DESIGNED NOT ONLY TO DECLARE OUR DESIRES, WHAT WE CONSIDER NECESSARY, BUT ALSO NOT TO PERMIT DISTORTION OF OUR INTENTIONS, AND TO PREVENT ISRAEL BEING ACCUSED OF RECALCITRANCE AND IMPERMEABILITY REGARDING SEEKING A WAY FOR THE OPENING OF NEGOTIATIONS."

6. RABIN CONTINUED THAT ISRAEL IS STILL NOT ASSURED THAT NEGOTIATIONS WITH EGYPT WILL TAKE PLACE. ONCE DISCUSSIONS GET UNDERWAY FOR INTERIM SETTLEMENT WITH EGYPT, ISRAEL'S READINESS TO REACH AN AGREEMENT WOULD EMERGE. ISRAEL WILL CAREFULLY EXAMINE THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY IMPLICATIONS OF THE OTHER SIDE'S COMMITMENTS.

7. IN CONCLUSION, RABIN STATED THAT GOI IS PURSUING AN ACTIVE POLICY FOR RESUMPTION OF NEGOTIATIONS, WITH EMPHASIS ON THE COMPONENTS OF A SETTLEMENT. THERE ARE PARTIES IN THE KNESSET LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WHICH TOTALLY REJECT THE STAGED APPROACH. "BUT WE WERE ELECTED IN ORDER TO CONDUCT OUR OWN POLICY, NOT SOMEBODY ELSE'S."

8. IN OPENING KNESSET DEBATE, HERUT LEADER MENAHEM BEGIN CHARGED THAT RABIN'S HAARETZ INTERVIEW DEMONSTRATED HIS SUPERFICIALITY, LACK OF WISDOM AND IRRESPONSIBILITY. BEGIN SAID THAT RABIN'S PUBLIC DECLARATION THAT ISRAELI POLICY AIMS AT DIVIDING SYRIA FROM EGYPT WOULD ACTUALLY BRING TWO STATES CLOSER

TOGETHER. HE ALSO REJECTED RABIN'S STATEMENT IN INTERVIEW THAT EGYPT WAS MODERATE STATE, FOLLOWING SAME BASIC LINE AS ISRAEL AND US. COMMENTING ON RABIN'S STATEMENT RE RE-OPENING OF SUEZ CANAL, BEGIN SAID THAT THIS WILL GENERATE PRESSURE FOR ISRAEL TO AGREE TO FURTHER WITHDRAWAL AS CONDITION FOR OPENING THE CANAL. BEGIN CONCLUDED THAT HAARETZ INTERVIEW HAD DESTROYED RABIN'S CREDIBILITY, AND CALLED ON HIM TO RESIGN AND HOLD NEW ELECTION.

9. IN PARLIAMENTARY ACTION AT END OF DEBATE, SEVEN LABOR PARTY MKS VIOLATED COALITION DISCIPLINE BY ABSTAINING FROM RABIN'S RECOMMENDATION TO TRANSFER ISSUE TO KNESSET FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY COMMITTEE, VOTING INSTEAD TO STRIKE IT OFF KNESSET AGENDA ENTIRELY. ABSTAINERS EXPLAINED THAT THEIR POSITION WAS INTENDED AS REBUFF TO LIKUD FOR ITS FIERCE ATTACK ON RABIN. BUT POLITICAL COMMENTATORS NOTE THAT DISSENTING POSITION ALSO UNDERSCORED RABIN'S DIFFICULTIES IN CONTROLLING LABOR'S KNESSET FACTION.

10. COMMENT: GIVEN FAIRLY WIDESPREAD CRITICISM TO HIS HAARETZ INTERVIEW (TEL AVIV 7072), RABIN APPARENTLY PREFERRED TO DEFLECT LIKUD KNESSET ATTACK BY SIMPLY RESTATING GOI FOREIGN POLICY GOALS AND SHIFTING FURTHER DISCUSSION TO THE SECRECY OF THE KNESSET FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY COMMITTEE. RABIN WILL DOUBTLESS REFLECT VERY CAREFULLY BEFORE REVEALING HIS THOUGHTS AGAIN IN PUBLIC ON NEGOTIATING STRATEGY AND TACTICS IN MOVING TOWARD AGREEMENTS WITH ISRAEL'S ARAB NEIGHBORS.
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